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## HEREDITARY CRIME.

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Magnificent are the scope and effectiveness of our organizations of charity, church, and state, for the repression of crime. They can cope, however, only with crimes that are the product of unfit environment by diminishing temptations or by strengthening the individual's inhibitions. But even if they should succeed in eradicating all such crimes there would still remain those committed by habitual criminals—criminals who are bred as race horses are bred, namely, by the process of assortive mating. Such are outside the pale of beneficent environment. They can no more help committing crime than race horses can help going. Precise information about these criminal breeds is hard to get; so much the more valuable, therefore, are the remarkable results obtained by Dr. Jörger, director of the Insane Asylum of Waldhaus-Chur in Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jörger noticed that the inmates of his institution very frequently bore the same family name. He marveled at this fact, the more so because it was the name of one of the most sturdy, sane, and respected families in the neighborhood. He was therefore led to make inquiry concerning the coincidence. His investigation showed indeed a blood relationship between the inmates of his institution and the respected family; but the respected family never furnished a single patient to his asylum. He found that the respected family descended in two lines, each of which maintained its integrity. Unfortunately there was a third line, the one that furnished not only all the inmates of that name to his institution but inmates to other kinds of state institutions. His full investigation disclosed such depths of degredation in the bad branch of the family that he has been constrained, out of consideration and respect for the good branches, to assume in his account of his researches a fictitious

<sup>1</sup>Jörger, "Die Familie Zero," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschafts-Biologie*, July-August, 1905.

name for the family and for their dwelling-place. He has assumed these names, however, according to a code in order that the true names may be made known at some future time. The family, including both the good and the bad branches, he has called the Zero family and their dwelling-place Zand.

Zand is an isolated village in a Swiss valley. It consists of 700–800 inhabitants only. The ancestry of each and every family he has been able to trace back to the seventeenth century. The isolation of this village has preserved in its inhabitants racial peculiarities in all their purity. The people of Zand are a branch of the German Walser colony. They are an industrious, economical, earnest, cautious, moral, and temperate people. Into many of their houses alcohol does not find its way year in and year out. They are either of medium height or tall of stature, and walk with the long stride of the mountaineer. Lack of pasture in season or the failure of other resources sometimes forces them out of the valley, but when affairs prosper with them their strong love of home brings them back again. They almost invariably marry women of their own valley and end an industrious life there—all of them except the Zeros. The Zeros drank, wandered aimlessly from home, persisted in no occupation, and almost always married foreign women. They usually returned home only when accompanied by police escort.

Dr. Jörger finds in the archives of the town that a Peter Zero was the chief magistrate in 1551, and later that a Eugene Zero held the same office. In 1727 a Carl Eugene Zero was baptized with rich and noble people as god-parents; hence he concludes that the family is one long native to Zand and one formerly held in high esteem there. Also he has been able to establish the fact that all the Zeros now living in Zand are descended from an Andreas Zero, a miller, born in 1639. Andreas married Ida Olga Lauter. This woman not only was a blood relative of her husband but her blood was tainted with insanity. She bore two sons, Peter and Ernst. Peter married Sina Frohman, a woman from a healthy, moral, and sturdy family, and from them descended one of the two good branches of the Zeros, a branch so upright that it no longer enters into

this story. The second son, Ernst, married twice. His first wife was a blood relative, a Lauter from the same family as his mother. Their son, Paul Alexius, was the founder of the vagabond and criminal branch. Ernst's second wife, Christina Scholler, bore a son Paul. Paul was an officeholder in Zand and married Ida Froham, a relative of the Sina Froham from whom the first good branch descended. This marriage gave origin to the second good branch of the family, a branch that has no further connection with this narrative.

Paul A., the son of the first wife, was not only the product of two generations of blood relatives but of marriage for two generations with blood contaminated by insanity. Paul's character was one not without suspicion before his own marriage. But his physique was good, for he lived to be 106 years old. It seems probable that he was an itinerant kettle-mender. At any rate his wanderings led him to the Valle Fontana in Italy—a place long noted for its kettle-menders and venders, a people so notoriously disliked that an old decree of Zand forbade them to enter its boundaries. Paul married a woman of this place. No record of his wife's name can be found, and he himself died away from home. This marriage with a woman of wandering and vicious disposition is, according to the opinion of Dr. Jörger, the cause of the permanent downfall of this branch of the Zeros. The Lauter blood, despite its kinship with the Zeros and its insanity, he believes, cannot alone be responsible for the complete and lasting degradation of this branch, for the two good branches descended from the first union with it. These good branches numbered only one degenerate in all their lines of descent. This one will soon enter into our story. However much or little the Lauter blood may have contributed to the decline, the marriage of Paul Alexius with the Italian kettle-mender and of their son Paul Jos with a German vagabond settled the fate of this line. Paul Jos, born in 1722, was the only child of the Italian marriage. He led a vagabond life very similar to that of his father. His vagabond wife was from the Marcus family, a German family that has remained in vagabondage until today. This Olga Marcus gave birth to seven children, but so persistently did the parents

wander that each child was born in a different place. The oldest was a girl; the remaining six were boys. These seven children were the parents of seven lines of degenerate Zeros. The rest of this story is an account of their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and of a few great-great-grandchildren. Dr. Jörger has named them in succession Prima Zero to Sesto Zero.

Prima Zero, the daughter, married one of her Zero relatives of the first good strain. The man was well educated for his time and place, and during his early life was a teacher. He had degenerated, however, even before his marriage, into a confirmed drunkard and a consequent idler. He soon deserted his wife, who died early. Fortunately she had given birth to only two children, a son and a daughter. The daughter, with better instincts, voluntarily ran away from her father after the mother's death and was brought up in Swabia. She was a respectable woman, never married, and spent her entire life as a servant. Her only brother had different instincts. He grew up in the care of some of his vagabond relatives and could scarcely write his own name. He followed various occupations such as kettle-mending and basket-weaving. He was displeasing in appearance, weak minded, and with very rudimentary moral conceptions. His wife was illiterate, vagabond, bold, and disreputable. Of their 8 children, 6 were vagabonds, 4 criminals (1 a murderer), 2 were drunkards, and 6 unlawful parents. These 8 children had borne 28 offspring up to 1903. Of these 10 were illegitimate, 6 vagabonds, 10 either weak-minded or idiotic, and 2 drunkards. Seven died in infancy or early childhood, and so were spared a worse fate. The 2 known great-grandchildren are illegitimate. One died the year of its birth. So much for the descendants of the daughter Prima Zero.

Secondo Zero, her oldest brother, married three times. His third wife was an Italian from the Valle Fontana. She bore him no children. On the whole, however, he chose better wives than was the custom of his kindred. His first wife bore one son; his second two, idiotic sons. All three were vagabonds. The eldest and youngest bore children, 8 each. Of these 16 children 4 were vagabonds, 1 was a drunkard, 2 were unlawful parents, 2

criminals, and 7 were mentally abnormal. The 17 great grandchildren number 2 unlawful parents, 1 criminal, 2 illegitimate, and 2 mentally abnormal. One of the five great-great-grandchildren is illegitimate.

Terzo Zero, the second brother, was the father of 7 children; 6 of them were vagabonds, 2 drunkards, 1 an unlawful parent, and 1 weak-minded. There were 12 grandchildren, 5 of whom were weak-minded, 2 drunkards, and 1 an unlawful parent. There are several dead great-grandchildren, 4 only are living, 2 of these are half-witted.

Quarto Zero, the third brother, married an Italian from Valle Fontana, who bore him 4 sons. Three of them were vagabonds and 1 was a drunkard. Of the 12 grandchildren, 4 were criminals, 5 unlawful parents, 2 drunkards, and 1 was weak-minded. There are 17 known great-grandchildren of whom 7 are illegitimate, 3 criminals, and 1 is an unlawful parent. All the known great-great-grandchildren, 4 in number, are illegitimate.

Quinto Zero, the fourth brother, was the parent of 2 vagabond sons who gave him 6 legitimate and 1 illegitimate grandchildren. Of these 4 were vagabonds, 1 was a drunkard and 1 an unlawful parent. Two of his 3 great-grandchildren are vagabonds.

Sesto Zero, the fifth brother, married twice and had 4 children, of whom 2 were idiotic and 2 vagabonds, 2 criminals, and 2 unlawful parents. The record of his grandchildren is no better for 2 of them were illegitimate, 4 unlawful parents, 4 idiots, 6 vagabonds, and 2 criminals. There are 42 known great-grandchildren, 9 of whom are illegitimate and 7 idiotic. Twelve died in very early infancy. Of 13 neither the date of birth nor the fate are known to the investigator.

Settimo Zero, the sixth and youngest brother was a drunkard. He is the father of 5 children, of whom 4 are vagabonds, 2 idiots, 2 unlawful parents, 1 is a murderer, and 1 a drunkard. These bore in all 16 offsprings; of these grandchildren 2 are illegitimate, 8 vagabonds, 5 weak-minded, 5 unlawful parents, and 3 criminals. There are 22 great-grandchildren, 13 of whom are

illegitimate, 6 weak-minded, 2 others not ordinarily bright, and 11 of them have already died.

In the foregoing categories it will be seen that the individual frequently appears in two or more classes. In all Dr. Jörger has investigated the characteristics of 310 persons, of whom 190 are still living. On account of the high percentage of illegitimacy many relationships have doubtless escaped his inquiry. Notwithstanding all difficulties he has been able to trace the geneology of the family for nine generations. Many individuals of the last three generations are personally known to him.

External signs of degeneracy were early observable in the Zeros. They had a halting gait in contrast to the long stride of the other people of Zand. Their stature diminished until now very many of them are conspicuously dwarfed. For a very long time the people of Zand have recognized that these Zeros are different from themselves and that they are an element to be avoided. Strabismus and pustules on the face are a family characteristic of the Zeros. Indeed the frequency of cross-eyes was only rivaled by that of rickets. The Zeros, both from lack of desire and parental encouragement, attended neither school nor church unless compelled by village authority. Nor were they mentally capable of much accomplishment. Many of them, however, had considerable mechanical skill, a gift which permitted them to lead their itinerant life.

In the days when police interference was light they wandered over the country singly or in bands, like gipsies. Not infrequently, indeed, they associated with gipsies. Their language, however, is of German origin and shows that they are not of gipsy descent. They have in addition many words peculiar to themselves. They were wont to drive about in old wagons followed by numerous dogs. Indeed their advent in a neighborhood was a warning to the inhabitants to shut up in safe inclosures as quickly as possible all valued dogs. For want of sufficient draught animals the women and children were often forced to carry heavy burdens. The men ostensibly practiced such professions as crockery- and kettle-mending, rag- and bone-picking, basket-weaving, house-cleaning, etc. In reality they worked

little and smoked much, while the women sold wares and begged. Indeed vending was, for the most part, only an excuse for begging, and clever beggars they were. They knew the inclinations and whereabouts of all the industrious inhabitants as well as the location of all their possessions. Thieving was just as common with them as begging. Parental responsibility was light with the Zeros and consequently infant mortality was high. Thus of 300, 74 died in early childhood. Illegitimacy was great. Parental irresponsibility, idiocy, and poverty have made this family for one hundred years a burden to the almshouse of Zand.

The real extent of drunkenness and crime in this family history cannot be accurately told. In the earlier days, especially when police control was lighter, much thieving went unrecorded and unpunished. The categories of their thefts are so numerous that many kinds must needs escape observation under any circumstances. They stole milk from the cows in the fields, vegetables from the gardens, poultry and dogs from the barnyards. On their vending expeditions they found opportunity to steal all kinds of wearing-apparel and articles of personal adornment as well as of the household. They were a highly superstitious people with a large supply of signs and omens, but, strange to say, they had little awe of the church. Robbing of alms-boxes, which in earlier days were placed outside of churches or on posts by the wayside, was a most common practice with them. The bolder of them robbed tailor shops, markets, monasteries, and even the altars of churches. A few of the more clever have been counterfeits. Murder, the most desperate of their crimes, seems to be incited either by jealousy over women or by illegitimacy.

In discussing the various environmental causes that have contributed their share to the maintenance of such a state of vagabondage, immorality and criminality as exists among the Zeros, Dr. Jörger states that he considers alcoholism the most important. It plays so great a rôle in the fate of the Zeros that, he says, his whole account of them sounds like one vile tale of rum.

One great effort was made to break up the life habits of the Zeros and if possible save Zand from this burden. In 1861 an energetic Capuchin priest came to Zand. Under his influence



most of the children of all the poor families in Zand were taken from their own parents and divided among the respectable and industrious inhabitants to be reared and educated. The experiment brought good results with most of the children that were not Zeros. All the Zero children either ran away or were enticed away by their worthless kinsmen. It is clear, therefore, that the Zeros cannot be reclaimed by favorable environment. It is a matter of selective breeding, or better still of preventative breeding. Nature is already at work by the latter and more effective method. Physical weakness is becoming more pronounced with each generation and infant mortality is great.